

Psychology Undergraduate Research Experience (PURE)

Title of Project	Investigating Memory Intrusions for Medication Side Effects
Supervisor	Mary Jiang, Megan Reid Hobbs, Conal Monaghan
Supervisor Contact Details	Yangxueqing.Jiang@anu.edu.au
Expressions of Interest due by	Thursday 6 August 2026
Project Background	The placebo effect is when patients experience negative effects from medicines due to negative expectations rather than pharmacological action. Notably, people do not recall medication side effects uniformly: certain items are more likely to be remembered, or falsely remembered, than others. If some side effects are inherently more memorable or more prone to intrusion errors, patients may be more likely to expect and subsequently experience those effects, making them more susceptible to placebo responses. The intent of the current mixed-methods study is to explore why particular intrusion items are remembered more often than others. Identifying why specific side effect items are prone to incorrect recall could help pinpoint which side effects carry the greatest placebo risk, informing how this information is communicated to patients. There are two arms in the current project, where one student place is available for the quantitative arm (survey study) and one student place is available for the qualitative arm (interview study). Students in this project will complete: 1. Ethics Project Description: ANU Human Research Ethics Project Description containing an extended literature review addressing the current research question (<i>Assessment Item 1; due week 6</i>) 2. Data collection and analysis: Students in the quantitative arm will collect and analyse quantitative survey data. Students in the qualitative arm will perform 4-6 one-on-one interviews and analyse qualitative interview data. (<i>Assessment Item 2; due week 12</i>) 3. Communication of Findings: Deliver an individual 10-minute presentation accompanied by either slides or a poster on how findings could be interpreted and how they inform future studies. (<i>Assessment Item 3; due exam week 2</i>)

Time and duration of project	Semester 2, 2026 (12 weeks)
Pre-requisites	Undergraduate student in Psychology
Details of indicative assessments for this course are: 1. Review of the literature to address a research question (30%) 2. Presentation of a theoretical or empirical project (30%) 3. A summary paper (40%)	- Project Description – 30% - Data collection and analysis – 30% - Individual presentation (10 mins) – 20% - Active participation in meetings – 20%
Any additional information	We are seeking students who are detail-oriented and methodical, and interested in cognitive psychology and patient safety in general practice. This project is ideal for those aspiring to careers in health psychology research or clinical communication. Students will contribute to a study exploring why particular medication side effect items are more prone to recall errors, with the potential to inform how nocebo-risk information is communicated to patients in real-world clinical settings.
Places Available	2